

CIRM Sends Open Letter to Presidential Candidates Regarding Funding for Stem Cell Research on Stem Cell Awareness Day

Posted: September 25, 2008

SAN DIEGO, Calif., September 25, 2008 - Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has declared Sept. 25 to be Stem Cell Awareness Day. In the proclamation he said, "The discoveries being made today in our Golden State will have a great impact on many around the world for generations to come."

Dr. Alan Trounson, president of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), the state stem cell agency, said that Stem Cell Awareness Day will help draw attention to science that will one day bring dramatic advances in human health. "The events on Stem Cell Awareness Day are designed to inform a broad audience of patients, clinicians, students and the general public about some of the many advances in the field that California is helping to accelerate through CIRM funding," he said.

To mark the day, Trounson and Robert Klein, Chairman of the Independent Citizen's Oversight Committee, co-signed an open letter to the presidential candidates regarding funding for stem cell research and biomedical research in general. The letter reads:

"Today, California is marking Stem Cell Awareness Day. For the millions who suffer from incurable diseases and injury, today is a day to celebrate the scientific advances made to-date and be hopeful of what is yet to come.

The research being accelerated by the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) could one day offer stem cell derived therapies and cures for more than 70 currently incurable diseases and injuries. But no single state can provide the level of funding or the political will that is needed to ensure the long-term success of this vital medical research. Leadership and funding at the Federal level is desperately needed to ensure that we realize the benefits from what is one of the most promising fields of science in this century.

That is why we implore both Republican Sen. John McCain, and Democrat Sen. Barack Obama to commit their administration to *sustained* levels of funding for all biomedical research and in particular, to *all types of stem cell research*. We believe that if they answer this call to action, we will soon realize significant medical benefits for patients around the world and increase our ability to control health care costs here at home.

Earlier this month, a panel of experts convened by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences confirmed what stem cell researchers throughout the world know - that the use of embryonic stem cells is still necessary. They remain the gold standard. As the expert panel, chaired by Richard Hynes of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology stated "It is far from clear at this point which types cell types will prove to be the most useful for regenerative medicine, and it is likely that each will have some utility."

By fully capitalizing on this area of scientific research, we have a chance to develop therapies and cures for a long list of serious diseases, injuries and genetic conditions, from cancer to spinal cord injury to Alzheimer's, and an opportunity to restore quality of life for these patients and their families. We also have an opportunity to save billions of dollars we now spend on lost productivity and medical care for these patients. Stem cell research also holds promise for developing powerful environmental toxicity tests, drug screening, and patient diagnostic tests that can help save lives and eliminate serious potential roadblocks on the road to faster, more effective clinical trials for all kinds of intractable conditions.

California is making a bold investment in the promise of stem cell research, but it is up to the new leadership in Washington to ensure we capitalize on the full potential this science holds for us all."

Sincerely,

Alan Trounson

President

Robert Klein

Chairman

Independent Citizen's Oversight Committee

Stem Cell Awareness Day Activities

Activities to celebrate Stem Cell Awareness Day are planned throughout California:

- **8:00 AM - Spotlight on Disease: Juvenile Diabetes:**The regularly scheduled meeting of the ICOC on September 25th will begin with a presentation on Juvenile Diabetes that will be Web cast at 8:00 a.m.

It will be available to view later at this archive site:

http://earth.ucsd.edu:8080/ramgen/cirm/2008_09_25_stemcell.rm

- CIRM will preview its new Web site with significantly more consumer and educational information. The retooled, more robust website is scheduled to go live next month.
- The Buck Institute for Age research will hold a community seminar titled "Aging in Global Populations: Challenge or Opportunity - How Can Science Help?" Speakers include Buck Institute faculty Gordon Lithgow, PhD and Adele Hayutin, PhD, Director of the Global Aging Population at the Stanford Center on Longevity. The event begins at 10:30 in the Drexler Auditorium at the Buck Institute's Novato campus. Please call 415-493-3638 to RSVP. There is a \$10 registration fee.

- 3:00 - 5:00 PM - Interactive Online Q&A with California Stem Cell Scientists:

Stem cell research scientists across the state will participate in a live chat moderated by CIRM's Chief Scientific Officer Marie Csete. Students and the general public were able to log on and submit a question that were be answered by one of a half dozen scientists including: Amander Clark, PhD (UCLA), Susan Fisher, PhD (UC, San Francisco), Dr. Larry Goldstein (UC, San Diego), Jan Nolte, PhD (UC, Davis), and Renee Reijo Pera, PhD (Stanford University School of Medicine).

- Stanford University School of Medicine will launch its new website for the Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine Institute (www.stemcell.stanford.edu)
- The University of California, Davis will break ground on their CIRM Institute being partially funded by a \$20 million CIRM Major Facilities grant. Visit the Web site to learn more about the UC Davis program: <http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/stemcellresearch/>.
- Monash Immunology and Stem Cell Laboratories (MISCL) is hosting a full day of Stem Cell

About CIRM:

The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) was established in 2005 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. To date, the CIRM governing board has approved 253 research and facility grants totaling more than \$635 million, making CIRM the largest source of funding for human stem cell research in the world. For more information, please visit www.cirm.ca.gov.

Contact:	Don Gibbons
	415-396-9117

	415-740-5855 (mobile)
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